

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02  
SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11  
/083 W

-----111003 170622Z /15

R 160816Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SANA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4733  
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T SANA 2313

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, YE  
SUBJECT: NEW GOVERNMENT BY MAY 20

BEGIN SUMMARY: ASNAJ DUCKS QUESTION ABOUT FAILURE  
AFTER THREE WEEKS OF YAR PRESIDENT GHASHMI TO FORM  
GOVERNMENT BUT PREDICTS DECISION BY MAY 20.  
END SUMMARY.

1. YAR FOREIGN MINISTER, ABDALLAH AL-ASNAJ, SPENT MUCH OF  
MEETING WITH ME ON MAY 15 DEFLATING VARIOUS THEORIES FOR  
FAILURE OF YAR PRESIDENT GHASHMI TO FORM GOVERNMENT AFTER  
THREE WEEKS OF EFFORT.

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2. HE SAID THAT IT MIGHT AT FIRST HAVE MADE SENSE NOT TO  
FORM GOVERNMENT WHICH SOUTHERN MINISTER WOULD QUIT IF  
THERE WERE AN ATTACK ON ABDALLAH ABDAL ALIM. HOWEVER,  
THAT FEAR, HE THOUGHT, HAD LARGELY PASSED. ABDAL ALIM  
WAS "ISOLATED" FROM ALL PARTIES AND POLITICIANS IN YEMEN,  
NOT TO MENTION FROM OTHER OFFICERS, AND WIDELY RECOGNIZED

AS A "MENTAL CASE." HE IS NOT, HOWEVER, IN TOUCH WITH PDRY FIGURES WHO, SAID ASNAJ, SEE ABDAL ALIM AS A NORTHERN PLOT TO DRAW SOUTH YEMEN INTO HOSTILITIES PREMATURELY AND IN WAY WHICH WILL ALLOW OMAN AND SAUDI ARABIA TO ENTER FRAY AGAINST SOUTH WITH BROAD ARAB AND WORLD BACKING. ASNAJ ADDED THAT HUIYARIYYA, HOMELAND OF ABDAL ALIM, SOUTH OF TAIZ, IS NOT BATTLEFIELD OF CHOICE OF NLF SEC GEN ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL. NOT ONLY DOES ABD AL-FATTAH WANT TO SPARE HIS OWN BIRTHPLACE THE DAMAGES OF WAR, BUT HE MIGHT HAVE MUCH BETTER SUPPORT IN CENTRAL PROVINCES ALONG DAMT--RADAA ACCESS.

3. LIKE AHMAD ABDO SAID ON MAY 13, ASNAJ TOLD ME TODAY THAT ABDAL ALIM HAS VERY LARGELY GIVEN UP HIS FORMER PLANS FOR A POSITION IN SANA, WHERE HE HAS PARANOIAC FEAR FOR HIS PERSONAL SAFETY. ASNAJ VOLUNTEERED THAT MIGS HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED TO TAIZ AND SOME MILITARY UNITS MOVED FROM NORTH TO SOUTH BUT SAID HE BELIEVED THAT ABDAL ALIM WOULD NOT HOLD OUT MUCH LONGER IF MATTER WERE DEALT WITH QUIETLY. (ON MAY 16, PRIME MINISTER ABDAL AZIZ TOLD ME SAME THING.)

4. ASNAJ SAID HE HAD TOLD ABDAL ALIM, EVEN BEFORE COMMAND COUNCIL DISSOLVED, AND WITH IT MOST COMMANDING POSITION OF ABDAL ALIM, THAT HE SHOULD ASK FOR OPPORTUNITY TO GO ABROAD WITH HIS FAMILY FOR THREE  
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MONTHS. ASNAJ, LEANING BACK, SAID "I TOLD HIM WE WOULD BUILD HIM A HOUSE OF TWO MILLION RIALS AND PAY ALL HIS BAR BILLS IN PARIS." ASNAJ SAID HE MIGHT AFTERWARDS BE ABLE TO COME BACK TO SOME CIVILIAN POSITION OR AT LEAST BE "FREE TO COME AND GO, WITH HIS INTERESTS HERE PROTECTED."

5. ASNAJ WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT ABDAL ALIM PROBLEM WAS REASON GHASHMI CONTINUED TO HESITATE TO ANNOUNCE NEW GOVERNMENT. HE SAID HE DIDN'T THINK THAT SAUDIS SOUGHT ANY FURTHER DELAY OR EVEN HAD AN AGENDA APART FROM GETTING RID OF ABDA AL-KARIM AL-IRYANI. IN THIS REGARD HE SAID THEY HAD AGREED IN WRITING TO RETAINING IRYANI IN ANY ECONOMIC OR AGRICULTURAL POSITION; BUT IRYANI HAD TO GO AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION. HE DENIED THERE WAS ANY QUARREL ABOUT POSTS BETWEEN THE "CHIEF," MEANING GHASHMI, AND PARAMOUNT HASHID SHAYKH, ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN AL-AHMAR. HE SAID HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE FAILURE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT COULD NOT BE LAID AT THE DOOR OF ABDAL AZIZ ABDAL GHANI.

5. WHEN I ASKED AT THIS POINT WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR

THE DELAY IN FORMING THE GOVERNMENT, ASNAJ SAID QUITE  
EVENLY THAT HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT WAS WAITING FOR THE  
RIGHT STARS. HE SAID BELIEVED IN ASTROLOGY AND THE  
STARS MIGHT BE RIGHT AROUND THE 20TH OF MAY.

COMMENT: THE AGE OF AQUARIUS HAS COME TO YEMEN.  
I HAVE NO BETTER IDEA NOW THAN BEFORE I SAW ASNAJ ABOUT  
WHEN THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE FORMED OR WHO WILL BE  
IN IT. I DON'T THINK ASNAJ HAS EITHER, THOUGH HE ACTUALLY  
APPEARED SERIOUS ABOUT GHASHMI'S BELIEF IN ASTROLOGY.  
THE PROBLEM MAY BE THAT GHASHMI HIMSELF STILL DOESN'T  
KNOW, OR CAN'T IMPOSE HIS VIEW. IN ANY CASE, THE DELAY  
IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT ISN'T DELIBERATE. IT'S A FAILURE  
OF LEADERSHIP.

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## Message Attributes

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PRESIDENT GHASHMI TO FORM  
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